

BSA may admit homosexual youth

New policy would not allow for local option

IRVING, Texas (BP and local reports) — Members at the Boy Scouts of America, Inc. (BSA), national convention in May will consider a proposal that would allow youth who identify as homosexual to join the organization, but would leave in place the prohibition on homosexual Scout leaders, it was announced on April 19.

The proposed policy, unanimously approved by the BSA executive committee, differs significantly from a proposal that was discussed in February that would have allowed openly homosexual youth and leaders to participate. That policy would have made it a "local option," whereby each sponsoring organization would decide the policy.

Under the new proposal, there is a national standard and no local option.

"No youth may be denied membership in the Boy Scouts of America on the basis of sexual orientation or preference alone," the proposed resolution states in part.

The resolution criticizes sexual activity by youth, saying Scouting "is a youth program, and any



STAY THE COURSE — Members of the Boy Scouts of America, Inc. (BSA), holding American flags, gather near the podium at a prayer vigil and rally on Feb. 6 at the BSA headquarters in Dallas to show support for the traditional policy of the Scouts, which encourages them to be morally straight. The organization has been under intense pressure to admit openly homosexual scouts and practicing homosexual scout leaders since the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 2000 that BSA could maintain their long held policy of excluding homosexuals. The issue will again be addressed during the May 22-24 BSA annual meeting in Grapevine, Texas. (BP photo courtesy of Jerry Pierce)

sexual conduct, whether homosexual or heterosexual, by youth of Scouting age is contrary to the virtues of Scouting."

Two paragraphs later, it further says that "youth are still developing, learning about themselves and who they are, developing their sense of right and wrong, and understanding their duty to God to live a moral life."

The Boy Scouts leadership appeared poised in early February to lift its prohibition on homosexual Scout leaders and youth, but facing pressure from its base decided to put the matter before its 1,400 voting members at the national convention, which will be in May.

Frank Page, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee and cur-

rently interim pastor of First Church, Jackson, was outspoken earlier this year in urging the Boy Scouts to keep their current policy.

Page met earlier this year at various times in his Nashville office with the chief executives of AT&T, Ernst and Young, Exxon/Mobil, and Boy Scouts of

see BSA on p. 9

'Home Run' a hit with moviegoers

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — The latest faith-based motion picture marketed by Provident Films has enjoyed a solid opening weekend. Home Run, which tells the story of a Big League baseball player who falls from the spotlight due to his alcoholism and a DUI, finished No. 3 on a per-theater average, pulling in an estimated \$4,260 per theater.

Because the movie opened in only 381 theaters, as compared to the 3,000 or so theaters reserved for big Hollywood movies, the per-theater average is closely watched. Its total gross of \$1.6 million placed it at No. 12, although every movie above it was playing in at least 1,400 theaters.

Provident was the marketer behind Fireproof and Courageous, two Christian-themed films that were box office hits. Provident also recently marketed October Baby and Grace Card.

Home Run's opening weekend numbers are similar to those of October Baby, which Provident considered an opening weekend success.

Kris Fuhr, vice president of theatrical marketing for Provident, told Baptist Press last year that their goal is for a film to make \$3,000 per screen. She said at the time that Provident is becoming a "brand" for moviegoers.

Church planters dodge bullets, bombs in Watertown

WATERTOWN, Mass. (BP) — A Southern Baptist church planting resident at a Boston-area church found himself and his wife in the crossfire of a police shootout in the early morning hours of April 19 with the two suspects in the Boston Marathon bombings.

Stephen McAlpin, who is nearing the end of a one-year North American Mission Board church planting internship with Hope Fellowship Church in Cambridge, had just gone to bed around 12:40 a.m. when he and his wife heard something that sounded like fireworks.

By then officials had identified two brothers believed to be responsible for the double bombings that killed three and injured more than 170 people on April 15, and earlier on April 19 the suspects hijacked a car in Cambridge and drove to Watertown while being pursued by police.

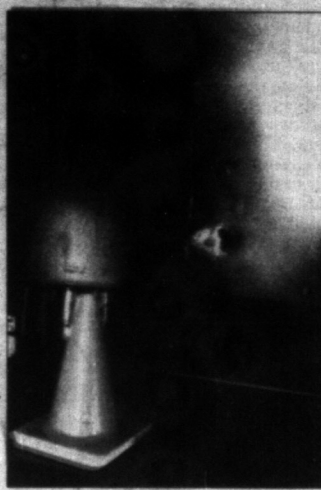
A wide-ranging shootout and

bomb-throwing commenced outside McAlpin's home, resulting in the death of Tamerlan Tsarnaev, 26, one of the suspects. The other suspect, Tamerlan's brother Dzhokar, 19, was captured later but not before causing the entire city of Boston and surrounding communities to be placed on lockdown as police searched for him door to door.

"The gunshots were continuing. We heard glass break. We started crawling into the kitchen of our home — me, Emily, and our dog," McAlpin recounted to NBC's Brian Williams on the afternoon of April 19. "As we were crawling, we saw a large flash like an explosion. We got underneath our kitchen table and continued to hear gunshots. They were much louder and felt closer."

The couple could hear yelling

see WATERTOWN on p. 9



TOO CLOSE

— A police evidence cone marks the location of a bullet that lodged in Southern Baptist church planter Stephen McAlpin's television set in Watertown, Mass., while police were engaged in a wild shootout just outside his home with the suspects in Monday's bombing at the Boston Marathon. (BP photo)

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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

The fork in the road for the Boy Scouts

Did I ever tell you about the young Zoad?

Who came to a sign at the fork of the road?

He looked one way and the other way too — the Zoad had to make up his mind what to do.

Well, the Zoad scratched his head, and his chin, and his pants.

And he said to himself, "I'll be taking a chance."

If I go to Place One, that place may be hot

So how will I know if I like it or not.

On the other hand, though, I'll feel such a fool

If I go to Place Two and find it's too cool

In that case I may catch a chill and turn blue.

So Place One may be best and not Place Two.

Play safe," cried the Zoad, "I'll play safe, I'm no dunce."

I'll simply start off to both places at once."

And that's how the Zoad who would not take a chance

Went no place at all with a split in his pants.

— The Zoad in the Road
Dr. Seuss

It's often hard to make decisions, as evidenced by this delightful but cautionary tale from the incomparable Theodor Seuss Geisel, known the world over as Dr. Seuss. The hapless Zoad in the end tried to play it safe, and he paid a price for his indecisiveness.

Thus the Boy Scouts of America, Inc. (BSA), have decided like the Zoad to play it safe, and if they follow through, will surely pay a price. The venerable organization has been under intense and uncalculated pressure for years from homosexual rights groups and many of BSA's corporate sponsors to admit openly homosexual scouts and permit practicing homosexual adults to serve as leaders.

It's been a campaign completely unfair to the scouting organization that has included near constant criticism from the news media. The result has been a huge toll on BSA's image and ability to raise the funds on which they depend.

The BSA organization is not the only one to feel the heat. The chief executives of AT&T, Ernst and Young, and Exxon/Mobil have all met with Frank Page, president of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, to express their position that Southern Baptists should continue to support BSA after the change in scouting's homosexual policy has been accomplished. Page has told all of them, in a word, "no."

In an effort to make everyone happy, the BSA executive committee voted unanimously on April 19 to submit a proposal to the attendees at BSA's annual meeting May 22-24 in Grapevine, Texas, that will admit openly homosexual youth to the scouting program but will continue to ban practicing adults from leadership positions.

So far, the compromise proposal that was supposed to make everyone happy has made no one happy. "Yet again, the Boys Scouts of America has failed its members, corporate sponsors, donors, and the millions of Americans who agree that the time has come to end discrimination in scouting is now," Rich Ferraro, a spokesman for the radical pro-homosexual group GLAAD told The Wall Street Journal. Scouts for Equality, another pro-homosexual group, announced in the Journal article that they will continue to push for acceptance of practicing homosexual leaders.

Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville, said in the Journal article, "A significant majority of the Southern Baptist boys will pull out and go somewhere else."

Don't be too hard on the Boy Scouts. When the pro-homosexual radicals finish off the Scouts, sooner or later they'll be coming for the church. Think about that.

Still, BSA's leaders need to make a principled stand. There are no grounds on which to compromise and remain true to their mission. No less than the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 2000 that the organization could exclude homosexuals when "the presence of that person affects in a significant way the group's ability to advocate public or private viewpoints." (*Boy Scouts of America et al v. Dale*, 530 U.S. 640 (2000))

Pray for the Boy Scouts of America. Like the Zoad, they've arrived at the fork in the road. What will they do?

Praying as Jesus prayed

While preparing to speak at a conference, I went into a small Sunday School classroom to pray. Sitting there in meditation, I noticed numerous prayer requests listed on a white board. I thought it was interesting that all the prayer requests on the board were focused on upcoming health tests and various physical needs in people's lives.

In fact, not one was focused on spiritual issues or the Father and His work in these peoples' lives.

We spend much of our time praying toward temporal issues that are focused on our circumstances and desires, but if North America is to be penetrated with the Gospel our prayers must focus on our Father and His purposes and desires.

In His High Priestly prayer during the last week of Jesus' earthly ministry, Jesus shows us how to pray toward the Father (John 17). Despite the intense circumstances of what is historically called "passion week," His prayer was focused on the Father and the fulfillment of His mission.

Father-focused

The God-centeredness of Jesus' prayer is evident in the opening word of the prayer as He addresses God as "Father." He repeats this endearing term six times in this poignant prayer (verses one, five, 11, 21, 24, and 25) addressing God as "Holy Father" and "Righteous Father" in two of those instances.

This term represents intimacy and relationship. Jesus teaches believers that prayer is relational and is not just something we do, like a ritual or task. As Christians, we are not praying to some impersonal deity in the heavens. He is our Father, and our access to come boldly into His presence cost Him greatly (Hebrews 10:19-20).

Mission-driven

The phrase, "the hour has come," points to Jesus' awareness of the significant times that were near. He was sensitive to the Father's hour and was praying with a view toward what the Father was accomplishing in His world.

What hour of the Father's is it today in your life, your family, your city, your nation, your world? How is the Father's hour impacting the way you pray? Are you praying toward the Father's hour?



Guest opinion
with Chris Schofield

Christ-exalting

Jesus' prayer, "Glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You," demonstrates selfless praying. His desire was that all would recognize who the Father was through the glory that would be revealed through the Son's righteous act of obedience.

This act of obedience is linked to the three "lifted up" sayings in John's Gospel — John 3:14, John 8:28, and John 12:32. The Father is glorified as the Son is lifted up on the cross, out of the grave, and is seated at the right hand of the Father where He ever lives to make intercession for those who believe (see Hebrews 7:25).

The Father is thus made known (glorified) as Jesus obeyed and was lifted up. Surrendering to the cross was the first step toward the completion of the work of the Christ that continues beyond that historical event.

Kingdom-building

As Jesus is glorified, the lost world is redeemed and the Father is made known as His followers tell the story of the Christ down through the ages (John 17:20). Pastor and theologian Warren Wiersbe in his book, *On Earth As it is in Heaven* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2010), correctly comments, "We glorify our Father in heaven by being what Jesus told us to be: salt in a decaying world and light in a dark world (Matthew 5:13-16)."

God-centered praying produces passionate and effective witnesses. It did then and it will now! How then shall we pray?

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SOUTHERN BAPTIST

VOLUME 137 • NUMBER 17 • ISSN-0005-5778

Published weekly except weeks of July 4 and Christmas by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, 515 Mississippi Street, Jackson, MS 39201. Subscription \$10.35 per year payable in advance. Economy plans available for cooperating Mississippi churches. Periodicals postage paid at Jackson, MS. Member, Association of State Baptist Papers. Deadlines: News items — one calendar week prior to requested publication date. Advertising — two calendar weeks prior to requested publication date. All submissions are subject to editing.

Baptist filmmakers set new direction

ALBANY, Ga. (BP and local reports) — Believing God is leading them to mentor the next generation of Christian filmmakers, Alex and Stephen Kendrick — best known for being the creative force behind the popular Christian-themed movies *Flywheel*, *Facing the Giants*, *Fireproof*, and *Courageous* — are moving in a new direction and launching their own independent production company.

This means they will be expanding their next films beyond the umbrella of Sherwood Church in Albany, Ga., although they will still live in Albany and remain on staff as associate pastors at the church under Pascagoula native Michael Catt, Sherwood's senior pastor.

"We have such a burden to help the next generation do this from a biblical perspective," Alex Kendrick told Baptist Press. "We've got to reproduce ourselves and duplicate ourselves, and we think this is the way to do it."

Instead of using Sherwood Church volunteers to help them make the next film, they plan to recruit aspiring Christian filmmakers and college students who have a long-term interest in producing Christian-themed films, thus providing the students vital experience for making their own faith-based films in the future.

Instead of shooting their next film in or around the church, they'll likely venture out to new locations and other states. In between making films, they hope to invest more in teaching budding Christian filmmakers about the craft.

One key reason they are going in a new direction, the brothers say, is because there are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Christian film students looking for direction in how to make faith-based films.

In a statement released this month on kendrickbrothers.com, they stated, "God has been clearly speaking to us through His Word, in prayer, and through the counsel of our pastor and other Godly men. This decision has come out of a faith-step of obedience to God's leading. We see the wisdom of the Lord's timing in all of this."

Alex Kendrick said he and his brother began sensing a coming change after the 2008 film *Fireproof*, but they and the church leadership believed God wanted them first to make the film, *Courageous*.

"We do not desire to leave Sherwood at all," Alex Kendrick



ON THEIR OWN — Brothers Alex (left) and Stephen Kendrick, who produced the popular Christian-themed movies *Flywheel*, *Facing the Giants*, *Fireproof*, and *Courageous*, plan to mentor young Christian filmmakers and say their next movie will not come under the umbrella of Sherwood Church in Albany, Ga. (BP photo)

told Baptist Press. "It is the best and most loving church we've ever been a part of. The pastor and volunteers at Sherwood have been incredible. They've served, prayed, and sacrificed to make these movies happen, but when we finished making each movie, all these volunteers would have to go back to their day jobs so we were not duplicating ourselves."

Stephen Kendrick said he and his brother are planning and thinking "long-term." Stephen is 39 years old. Alex is 42 years old.

"Sherwood has a banner on the wall that says 'whoever wants the next generation the most will get them,' and that is our heartbeat concerning filmmaking," Stephen Kendrick said. "We want to teach the next generation of Christian filmmakers, and we want to share with them how to pray through all their decisions, how to walk in the fear of the Lord, and how to give God the glory for everything they're doing in their filmmaking."

After *Facing the Giants* and *Fireproof* were released, many young people with an interest in making films began approaching the brothers and saying, according to Alex, "I want to make Christian films like you guys are doing and I feel called to do it, but where can I go and get training? Can I come mentor under you?"

"That really began bothering us," Alex said. "It got to the point where we felt the Lord saying, 'You guys need to start investing in this next generation.'"

Said Stephen, "Our pastor has been instilling in the staff the importance of looking beyond ourselves and getting outside the box. For years Michael has been pouring into young pastors at his Refresh conferences, and has led Sherwood to start new churches and engage an unreached people group in Germany."

"God has been using his words and example to inspire us to do this with filmmaking."

The Kendricks announced

their new plans before the Sherwood Church congregation on April 7 and received the blessing of Catt, who asked the church family to pray for them.

"We love these guys and are grateful for God sending them to our staff over a decade ago," Catt said in statement. "When we began this journey, none of us had movies in mind. It will be exciting for us to take the steps of faith required to see where God will take us."

"No matter what lies ahead, this has been an incredible ride for all of us. Our prayers are with them as they pursue future endeavors."

Facing the Giants, the brothers' first wide-release movie, had a budget of \$100,000 and grossed \$10 million in theaters. The next film, *Fireproof*, was budgeted at one-million dollars and grossed \$33 million. The budget for the next movie, *Courageous*, was two million dollars, and its theatrical release grossed \$35 million.

Theaters and movie distributors keep the majority of the theatrical gross. *Fireproof* and *Courageous* each opened in the Top Five nationally.

"We're rooting for the guys coming behind us to get better than we are," Alex said. The standard has to get better than *Courageous* and *Fireproof*. There's so much more room to grow. We would be selfish if we tried to stay where we are on a long-term basis. We've got to grow and teach [new filmmakers] and push them ahead of us."

"We've only made \$500,000 to two-million-dollar movies. These guys can come along and hopefully make much bigger movies that will compete with the best of Hollywood."

The leadership of several Christian schools, including University of Mobile, Truett-McConnell College, Liberty University, North Greenville University, Ouachita Baptist University, and Bob Jones University, have talked

with the Kendricks about their developing film programs, the Kendricks said.

"We're looking to work with the best of them as recommended by their professors and peers, and we hope to pull them in, make a movie with them, and show them how to pray, how to go through the process of making a Christ-centered feature film, how to avoid a lot of the problems that Hollywood has to deal with," Alex said.

There will still be a handful of professional crew members on the set, as was the case with *Fireproof* and *Courageous*. Students would mentor under those crew members during production.

"What we're discovering is that many of these young students are developing a skill level to make movies but lack the deeper maturity level to know what kind of theology and biblical worldview to present," Alex Kendrick said. "We want to train them to do the craft and storytelling, but equally, we want to train them to think biblically and make sure their theology is correct" — not just to make an action movie and sprinkle Bible verses on top."

Although Sherwood Church volunteers made up nearly all of the acting roles in *Facing the Giants* and *Fireproof*, that was not the case with *Courageous*, in which about half the cast was from outside the church.

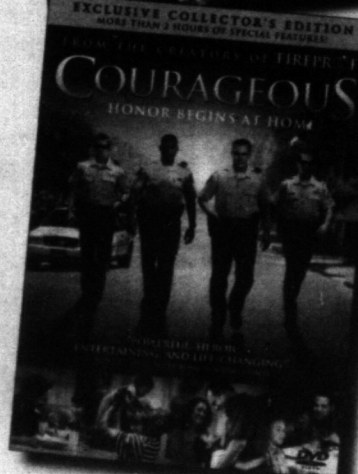
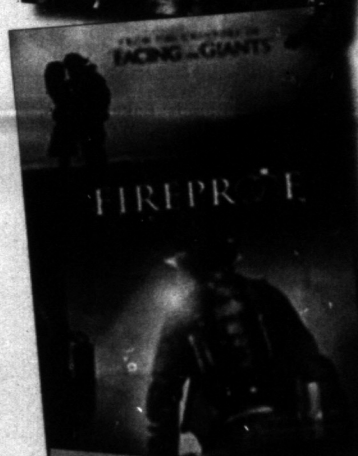
There is a "large group of talented Christian actors who are undiscovered," Alex said, "and we're interested in working with them, so for our next film we'll pull auditions from all over the country. People will be allowed to send clips of their work via YouTube or DVD. We'll look at those, look at their resumes, and narrow it down to the characters we need, and fly them in for auditions."

They hope to start writing their next film later this year with a potential release in late 2014, Alex said. "We're working on that right now, but a lot of stuff has to fall in place." In the meantime, people can sign up for email updates on kendrickbrothers.com.

There already have been films made that were inspired by what the Kendricks have done. *October Baby* was made by brothers Jon and Andrew Erwin after they left the *Courageous* set, where they served on the crew. *Grace Card* was made by Memphis David Evans after he watched *Fireproof* and wondered if his church, too, could make a movie.

Both *October Baby* and *Grace Card* did well in theaters.

"I would like to think we've got another seven or eight movies in us, but we need solid, biblically based, God-honoring movies every year," Alex said. "Yes, there are Christian movies being made, but this is too impactful of an avenue to reach people not to just go after it with all our heart and soul."



The radio was on and the news was being reported, but I really was not tuned in when they said, "An elephant has been shot!" I did perk up and listen well enough to hear that the elephant was a part of the Ringling Brothers Circus and supposedly it was a drive-by shooting. But when the news faded away I wondered where that could have happened and who would do such a thing. I thought maybe it was in some western locale where folks pack a sidearm and maybe just accidentally shot the elephant. Or maybe it was in some place where people were big time heavy drinkers. Someone had a few too many drinks, was hallucinating, and thought that an elephant was after them.

I did not know that the shooting had taken place in Mississippi among my own people. Hopefully, it did not involve any of my own kin. I actually did not think any of them did it, but until somebody was caught and charged with the crime I would not be totally at ease. I did hear some folks from the area where the elephant was shot making comments about the people who probably did it. They were assuming that it must have been some good ole boys from the next county over. They imagined that the conversation went something like this. "I ain't lying to you! That was the biggest deer I believe that I have ever seen." In thinking about the incident, I had several observations.

The first one was people do some dumb things. I understand people going hunting, and I have eaten my share of quail, venison, and even frog legs. But why would anybody drive by and shoot a multi-ton, mature animal that was not harming or threatening anybody? It is a thoughtless, senseless action. Even if you can figure out some way that it may have looked like a great idea at the moment the longer you think about it the dumber it gets. But that is the way all sin is. Though it may



They Shot an Elephant!

look like a great idea at the moment, in time you realize it was just dumb.

Why would Adam and Eve take fruit from the tree that God said, "Leave the fruit of that one tree alone?" They lived in a perfect world, but as we all know they did a dumb thing. But all of our sins ultimately look the same way. Ask David, Simon Peter, or Judas, and I hate to bring this up, but ask anybody you know including that reflection you see in the mirror. The Bible says that, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). And regardless of where we live, how smart we are, how much money we make, or what high positions we hold, we have all done dumb, wrong things. We have sinned.

My second observation when the elephant got shot was to reflect on the fact that there were innocent victims. In this case, it was a large animal, whose purpose in life at that time was simply to bring joy to children and folks attending the circus. And yet the shot rang out, there was an injury, and harm was done to a big, old innocent creature. Sadly, that is a large piece of the story related to all of our sins. We decide what we want and

just decide to do it with no thought of innocent bystanders, family members that have confidence and trust in us, fellow church members who grieve, and precious children who do not have any understanding at all as to why.

Within hours, Ringling Brothers was flying one of their full-time vets to be on the scene and to take care of the elephant. After treating the wound, they had a press conference, and the veterinarian said it would probably take several weeks to heal, but the elephant would be back at the circus. Really? Do you think that just because the wound disappears and the scar tissue develops that healing is complete for that big old beast? They say that elephants remember with an uncanny kind of memory. Therein is one of the problems that most of us encounter. While everyone else forgets often the most innocent of people who were hurt remember the most vividly.

Of course, we cannot stop there and as reasoning human beings we have to deal with it. As Christians, we have to come to grips with the acts of forgiveness and reconciliation and move on with our lives. I have seen that happen

in incredible ways and amazing degrees of grace. But there are ways in which even if we try to think it through, we do not understand the dimensions of the scars which unknowingly affect our relationships and our decisions in the future. It is one of the saddest parts of our sin infested, evil world. Those who are the most innocent may carry the biggest burden of our wrong.

One final observation is simply that life goes on. At the last report, the elephant was healing and doing fine. The circus performed and people enjoyed the event. For the rest of us, the spring days continue to get longer and the weather continues to be warmer with a few sprinklings of chill in the air every few days. And, of course, here in Mississippi we will forget about a drive-by shooting of an elephant because we have had tornadoes moving through our state. Congress continues to wrangle over one issue after another and people are in the midst of preparing for weddings, graduations, and an occasional unexpected funeral. In time, all of the strange happenings in Mississippi of an elephant being shot by somebody will fade in our memory. There will be new and possibly even stranger events that will take its place, but life will continue.

It is one of the glorious things that God does for His creation in these 24 hour cycles that we call days. They provide for us a new opportunity to do it better today than we did it yesterday. So today, let Jesus Christ, the Lord, bless you and use you. Reach out and help someone. Encourage a friend and share your love with someone. And above all just for today, don't shoot any elephants.

The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.

Bible Drill



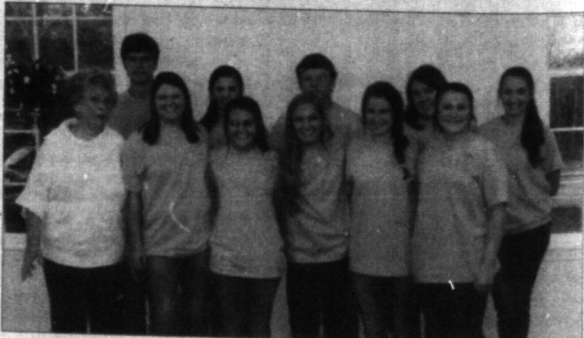
(TOP LEFT) SLAYDEN CHURCH, MARSHALL ASSOCIATION, recognizes its Bible drillers. Shown are Jake Mackey, Jenna Buse, Danny Mackey, Keira Riley, Annleigh Fair, and Kaede Carpenter. Judy Roberts, leader; Rusty Fair, pastor.



(BOTTOM LEFT) FIRST CHURCH, STARKVILLE, recognizes its youth Bible drillers: Back row - Jacob Reed, Bradley Curtis, Cameron Johnston, Sara Grace Duncan, Rebecca Swann, and Erin Linley; front row - Garrett Smith.

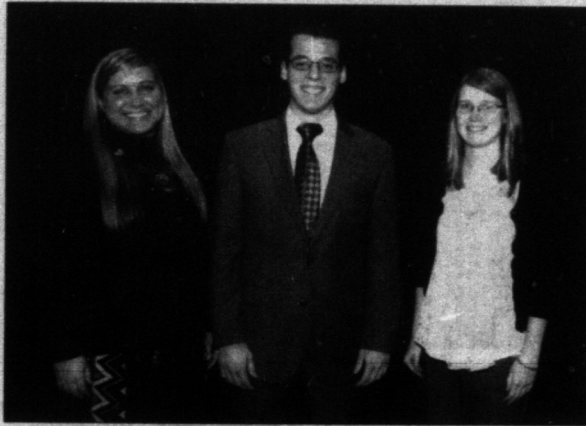


(TOP RIGHT) ACKERMAN CHURCH, ACKERMAN, recognizes its youth Bible drillers: Hayes Wood, Halea Wood, and Michelle Parker. Alison Hulett, director.



(BOTTOM RIGHT) PELAHATCHIE CHURCH, PELAHATCHIE, recognizes its children's Bible drillers and its youth Bible drillers.

College News



Three Northeast Mississippi students at **BLUE MOUNTAIN COLLEGE** were recently elected officers of the 2013-14 Student Body Association: (left to right) Macy Watkins of Pontotoc, vice president; Nathan Rodgers of Fulton, president; and Rachel Walker of Ripley, secretary-treasurer.

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In other College News:

► Mark Slyter, the CEO of Baptist Health Systems in Jackson, will serve as the keynote speaker at **Mississippi College's** two commencements for undergraduates on May 11. Slyter, who grew up in Augusta, Kansas, arrived at Baptist Health Systems in 2009 as chief operating officer and was elevated to CEO in September 2011. The series of graduations this spring begins on May 10. Judge Carl Stewart of the U.S. 5th Circuit Court of Appeals based in New Orleans, will speak at the MC School of Law commencement. Ceremonies begin 10 a.m. at First Church in downtown Jackson. Landa Gayle Farrar Strum, a professor at the MC School of Nursing, will address nursing graduates at 2 p.m. May 10 at Swor Auditorium on the Clinton campus. Randall Crenshaw, executive vice president and chief operating officer at CommScope, will be the keynote speaker at commencement for graduate students at 7 p.m. on May 10 at the A.E. Wood Coliseum.



Seven former athletes and one former coach were inducted into the **WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY** 2013 Sports Hall of Fame on April 13. They are (front row, left to right) Brian Moore, representing his uncle Coach Glenn Moore, current softball coach of Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and former Carey softball coach from 1995 - 1996; Marco Zannoni of Switzerland, tennis ('94); Danny Owens, current women's soccer coach at WCU, soccer ('99); Nancy Gartin Sterling of Meridian, tennis ('79); (back row, left to right) Robbie Parker of Petal, baseball ('79); Tommiesene Beasley of Gulfport, basketball ('84); James McDade of Los Angeles, Cal., ('79), and Ricky McMullen of New Orleans, baseball ('79).



Five alumni were inducted into **WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY'S** Hall of Fame at the Homecoming 2013 Alumni Banquet on April 12 in the Student Conference Center. Pictured are (left to right) Cindy Cofield, alumni director at William Carey University, Julie Knippers Shrubbs, representing her husband Ric Shrubbs ('94), Kourtney Hollingsworth ('08), R.T. Buckley ('61), Ramona Fant ('60), and Martha Hutson ('70).

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Shown are **WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY** retirees Bobbie Coward, housekeeper, who served 14 years; B.J. Martin, professor of anatomy and assistant dean for research, 24 years; Linda York, controller and compliance director for financial affairs, 18.5 years, and Dr. Eugene Owens, professor of education and music and chair of special programs, 13 years, with Dr. Tommy King, president of WCU, at the reception held in their honor in the president's meeting room on April 10. Each retiree received an inscribed clock as a token of appreciation for their years of service to the university. Not pictured are WCU retirees Becky Runnels, housekeeper, 10 years, and Brenda Waldrip, assistant professor of education and vice president of student services, 37.5 years.

Just for the Record



POCAHONTAS CHURCH, POCAHONTAS, licensed and ordained Gray Cole to the ministry Mar. 17. Shown are Pocahontas pastor Michael Bird; Cole; Joe Cole, pastor of First Church, Flora; and Rob Ricks.

RAMAH CHURCH, MC-CALL CREEK, ordained Mark Mowdy and James Patt as deacons Mar. 24. Shown are Karen Mowdy, Mowdy, pastor Lonnie Case, Patt, and Melissa Patt.



The children of **SUNRISE CHURCH, CARTHAGE**, enjoyed an Easter egg hunt the Saturday before Easter.



OAK GROVE CHURCH, PRENTISS, ordained Wayne Bass as deacon Mar. 3. Shown are Bass and pastor Terry Wallace.



EASTSIDE CHURCH, PEARL, ordained Raymond Dyess as deacon. Shown are pastor Ron Harrison, Dyess, and Fredna Dyess.

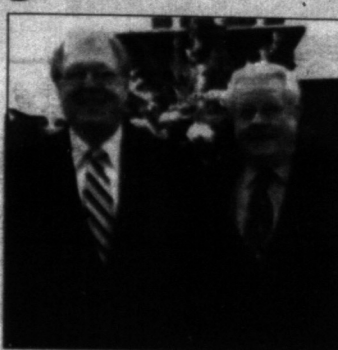
WEST MCCOMB CHURCH, PIKE ASSOCIATION, ordained Chad Boarman as deacon and James Bryant was elected as deacon Apr. 7. Shown are April Boarman, Boarman, pastor Vann Windom, Bryant, and Vicki Bryant.



Staff Changes

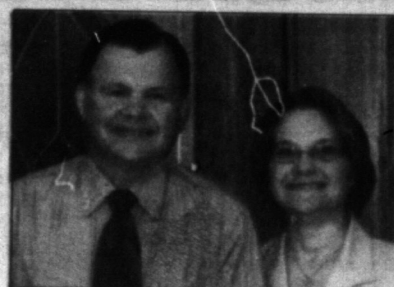


SUNRISE CHURCH, PETAL, has called Tracey Hipps as pastor. He has been in the ministry for over 25 years. He is shown with his wife Patricia.



CLARKSDALE CHURCH, CLARKSDALE, has called Jerry Beaty as associate pastor of music and senior adults. Shown are pastor Don Dunavant and Beaty.

FIRST CHURCH, VARDAMAN, has called Archie Goodwin as pastor. He and his wife Rhonda come from Corinth Church, Carroll County.



In other Staff News:

➤ George Stanley Downs, Bay Springs, is available for pulpit supply. He is a bivocational pastor and can be reached at (601) 670-1527, 764-3610, or at sdowns1417@gmail.com.

BIBL i O C I P H E R

GPVA BQ HJNU XTZAOVY GZOPZA BV
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EMTQVM ITBV ZA NAOJ OPVV, ZAOJ
OPZAV PJUQ OVBEUV.
FJATP OGJ: HVSVA

Clue: E = P

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Joel 1:5

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005

Testimony COOPERATIVE PROGRAM



featuring
Tim Mims
Senior Pastor FBC of Bushnell, Florida

Mississippi Baptists really strengthened my ministry

I am blessed to be called to the ministry by the LORD Jesus Christ. My parents, George and Janice Mims, of Sidon, MS, modeled before me the life of a disciple of Christ. One night around the dinner table, at the age of eight, my father led me to faith in Christ. About a year after graduating from high school, God began to place an overwhelming desire on my heart to preach the gospel and serve His local church. God brought me to a place of absolute surrender, and one Sunday evening during the worship service, God made it clear in my heart that I was to preach the gospel. I began to weep. When the invitation was given I went forward in the service and committed my life to the gospel ministry.

After my wife finished nursing school, we prayerfully considered undergraduate schools. God used a conversation with a local pastor, to encourage us to visit Blue Mountain College. We scheduled a visit to the campus and upon entering the gates we were overwhelmed with the presence

of God. As we connected with faculty and staff at the college, God confirmed that I was to attend BMC. I began classes in 2000 and graduated in 2003. God's plan for me to connect at Blue Mountain has continued to unfold over the years. As I look back, the support received from Mississippi Baptists and the Cooperative Program really strengthened my ministry. The preparation for ministry and academics at BMC encouraged me to be an effective minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ through several pastorates in Mississippi. The Lord also used the college to lay a foundation for graduate work at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. While serving Pine Grove Baptist Church in Picayune, MS, I received the M.Div., Th.M., and Ph.D. degrees from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. My desire is to use those investments in my life to make Christ known to every generation.

To view this Cooperative Program Testimony online, please visit <http://www.mcb.org/cp/videos.aspx>

Just for the Record



The WMU Leadership Team of **CALHOUN ASSOCIATION** hosted an appreciation tea for the pastors' wives in the association Mar. 24. Shown, seated, is Deanie Ferrell who was selected Queen for a Day.

In other Church News:

➤ **Hope Church, Philadelphia**, held a Blessing the Children service Apr. 14. All the children and youth came down front and the members came by each one and gave their blessing to them. Dennis Duval, pastor.

➤ **Pelahatchie Church, Pelahatchie**, will host Buddy Liles in concert Apr. 28, 6 p.m. Love offering.

➤ **First Church, Helena**, is hosting the Florida Boys in concert May 4, 6 p.m. For information, call (228) 475-7182.

SPRINGFIELD CHURCH, MORTON, recently ordained Scotty Joe Cooper to the gospel ministry. Shown are Kendall Winstead, Riley Dollar, Cooper, and transitional pastor Gerald Keith Gordon.



The choir of **EVERGREEN CHURCH, SHUBUTA**, presented their Easter cantata, Calvary's Love, Mar. 24. Richard O'Neal, director; John Franklin, pastor.

A group from **PLEASANT RIDGE CHURCH, DUMAS**, visited the Baptist Children's Village - Farrow Manor, Coldwater for a workday Apr. 13. They cut down and cleared trees and cooked hot dogs and hamburgers for residents. Donations of hygiene and cleaning supplies were also delivered.



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The pre-school choir of **FIRST CHURCH, EUPORA**, sang Jesus is Alive and Names of the 12 Disciples Easter Sunday.

Ministry assistants 'purse-onify' annual conference at Garaywa

JACKSON, Ms. (Special) — Ministry assistants from across the state gathered April 8-9 at Garaywa Camp and Conference Center in Clinton for the 2013 Mississippi Baptist State Ministry Assistants Conference.

Cheri Holcomb of In the Cross-Ties Discipleship Ministries in New Albany and Luanne Ford, director of music ministries at First Church, Booneville, led in worship using this year's theme, "Purse-onify Your Ministry," based on Romans 14:19 — "So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding."

Attendees brought many gently used purses that were sold with proceeds going toward a mission project.

Eight break-out sessions were offered for the ministry assistants. The annual banquet was held on the evening of April 8, featuring Mark Coon and his daughter Anne Albritton, both of First Church, Madison. The ministry assistants also voted on a new association logo.

Newly elected officers of the Mississippi Baptist State Ministry Assistants Association include (front row, from left) Shirley Sisk, vice-president, First Church, Houston; Amy Massey, treasurer, First Church, Morton; (back row, from left) Cathy Taylor, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board representative, Hillcrest Church, Byram; Sarah Kirby, secretary, Highland Colony Church, Ridgeland;

Melissa Kleiderer, president, Longview Heights Church, Olive Branch; Patricia Ethridge, second vice president, North Greenwood Church, Greenwood.

For more information on training and conferences for ministry assistants, contact the Pastor/Leadership Department, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3305, or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 305. E-mail: ctaylor@mbcb.org.

Mississippi Baptist Ministry Assistants Association conferences and training sessions are supported by gifts to the Mississippi Cooperative Program and fees.



OBITUARY

Raymond Parkin, 81, Petal, died Feb. 28. He was called to the ministry at Katherwood Church, Birmingham, Ala., in 1957 with N.L. Gilliland, pastor. He was ordained at Dolomite Church, Dolomite, Ala., with Dan Ireland, pastor. He pastored Enon Church, Centerville, Ala.; Smithville Church, Bessemer, Ala.; Carmel Church, Meridian; Vinemont Church, Vinemont, Ala.; Faith Church, Vinemont, Ala. (founding pastor); Crestview Church, Petal, and



PARKIN

Baxterville Church, Baxterville. He led revivals through-

out Mississippi and Alabama, as well as Florida, Ohio, and Arkansas. He served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War. He is survived by his wife of 59 years, Wanda; two sons, Rodney of Nashville, Tenn., and Kevin of Petal; two daughters, Kaye of Brandon and Faye of Sumrall; three granddaughters and one sister. Funeral services were held at Crestview Church, Petal, Mar. 3 and interment at Forest Memorial Gardens, Petal.

Submission Guidelines



The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either e-mail, CD or DVD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lit. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items are generally not publishable. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

Will you not revive us again,
that your people may rejoice in you?
Psalm 85:6



REVIVAL

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SA

nt. from p. 1

merica, Inc., who all urged him encourage Southern Baptists continue to support scouting the homosexual policy was changed in May.

The Boy Scouts organization reports that Southern Baptist churches are the sixth-largest supporters of BSA troops, with 100 units and 109,000 scouts. Nationally, about 70% of scout units are supported by faith-based organizations. The Church

of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, also known as the Mormons, lead with 38,000 units and 420,000 scouts.

There is no central database containing the number of Mississippi Baptist Convention churches that support Scout troops.

"We said in January we wished the Scouts would listen to the whole scouting family, not just a few," Page said April 19. "The leadership listened. Chief among the concerns they heard is the influence of adult leaders on impressionable youth."

"Though this resolution is

more acceptable to those who hold a biblical form of morality than what was being considered before, we would still prefer no change in the policy. A No vote keeps the current policy in place, an outcome we would overwhelmingly support."

Also on April 19, the Boy Scouts released the results of a series of surveys it conducted. Among the findings:

■ 61% of adult Scout members favor the current policy, while 34% oppose it.

■ 61% of Boy Scout parents support the current policy,

while 50% of Cub Scout parents back it (45% of Cub Scout parents oppose it).

■ 51% of major donors support the current policy while 33% oppose it — but a majority of Fortune 500 companies want to see the policy changed.

■ A majority of teens, ages 16-18, in the Boy Scouts program oppose the current policy. A percentage was not given.

The Boy Scouts also reported that parents, teens, and the Scouting community "do not favor" a local option as proposed in February.

WATERTOWN

cont. from p. 1

and what sounded like another explosion. "I'm a grown man, but at that point I was terrified and I was holding my wife there under the table and holding my dog, and it got real for us," McAlpin said. "We realized that we could die."

McAlpin told Williams via telephone that he and his wife are Christians and they prayed in those most dangerous moments that God would keep them safe. "We prayed for God's grace to protect us and protect our neighbors and just sat there," he said.

They moved into their bathroom and huddled in the bathtub with their dog, and after about 30 minutes, police knocked on their door and showed them what had happened. Bullets had entered their living room. One was lodged in their television, which kept it from entering their bedroom on the other side of the wall. Another had hit a picture frame. Outside, their SUV sustained damage from a bullet.

Police were marking the evidence in and around their home, which included "many bullets and shells around the side of our house and also in the front," McAlpin said. "Since then we've just been staying in our kitchen, trying to stay safe. It's overwhelming to us that all of this happened, but we just feel blessed to be safe."

"We know how easily things could have gone poorly for us and we're just thankful for God's grace in protecting us. I don't really know. It doesn't feel real. You never think in your home when you're safe and trying to sleep that bullets are going to come through and that explosions are going to happen."

McAlpin also told Williams, "We're in shock. I haven't been able to go to sleep. We're exhausted but we've just been trying to share about what happened and even just tell people about the kind of hope that we've found in God during this really dark time."

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EDITOR: CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH OF SCOTTSBORO, AL IS PRAYERFULLY REQUESTING TO CALL A SENIOR PASTOR to lead this conservative southern baptist church located in northeast Alabama about 45 miles east of Huntsville. Candidates who feel led by God to this calling should e-mail resumes to cbcAlabama@gmail.com.

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YOUTH PASTOR/DIRECTOR/MINISTER/COORDINATOR. Denomination: Southern Baptist. First Baptist Church Collinsville, MS is seeking a full-time Youth Pastor; see ypsc@fbcc.com for further details.

SOUTHSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH, LUCEDALE, MS IS SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL WORSHIP LEADER. Please send resume to Southside Baptist Church, 18124 Highway 26 W, Lucedale, MS 39452. Attn: Music Search Committee

GUNTER ROAD BAPTIST CHURCH, FLORENCE, MS IS SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR. Please send resumes to rdclukes@bellsouth.net. If mailing please send to 2209 Woodland Place, Florence, MS 39073

SMALL CHURCH NEEDS SOMEONE TO DEVELOP AND LEAD FAMILY MINISTRY PROGRAM. Requirements include passion and eagerness to reach families and help them develop a relationship with Jesus. Great opportunity for hands-on experience in family ministry. Send resume to: Personnel Committee, Grandview Baptist Church, 900 South Pearson Road, Pearl, MS 39208

FBC OF PEARL IS LOOKING FOR A PART-TIME CHILDREN'S MINISTER Contact Pastor Scott Crawford at scottcrawford01@msn.com

LIBERTY BAPTIST CHURCH, FLOWOOD, MS IS SEEKING A MINISTER TO CHILDREN & FAMILIES. Resumes may be emailed to office@bcflowood.org, or mailed to Children's Search Team, 5199 Lakeland Dr. Flowood, MS 39232.

STEEENS FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, STEENS, MS. IS CURRENTLY IN SEARCH OF A PASTOR. Candidates must preach only from the King James Version Bible. Steens FBC, P.O. Box 40, Steens, MS 39766, Attn: Pulpit Committee

HAMILTON BAPTIST CHURCH IS LOOKING TO FILL THE POSITION OF YOUTH PASTOR. Bi-vocational position. Please send resume to Youth Pastor Search, c/o Andrew Garvin, 40173 Holloway Rd. Hamilton, MS 39746.

HAMILTON BAPTIST CHURCH SEEKING BI-VOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC. Send resumes to Larry Whitaker-40264 Hamilton-Road, Hamilton MS 39746

THE MUSIC AND YOUTH SEARCH COMMITTEE OF MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH, IN MENDENHALL, IS SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER / YOUTH MINISTER. If interested, please send resumes to Sandra Weathersby, 564 Peacock Road, Mendenhall, MS. 39114.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, NETTLETON IS SEEKING A PART-TIME STUDENT PASTOR. Please send resumes to: First Baptist Church, Attn: Student Pastor Search Committee, PO Box 427, Nettleton, MS 38858

NEW SIGHT BAPTIST CHURCH, BROOKHAVEN, MS. SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER. Please send resumes to 629 Forest Trail, Brookhaven, MS. 39601, Attn: Youth Search Committee.

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3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)

By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

THE VILLAGE VIEW



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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

JANUARY 1-15, 2013

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JANUARY 16-31, 2013
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JANUARY 16-31, 2013
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Ms. Sharlett Faircloth

Partner with The Baptist Children's Village for VBS!



There are three ways your church can partner with The Baptist Children's Village this year during Vacation Bible School.

- Order FREE VBS Nametags.**
The Baptist Children's Village is again offering free nametags. This year the nametags are reversible and relevant for either of the LifeWay curriculums. You can see a picture of the VBS nametag above. They have two pre-punched holes for you to easily put a string in each.
- Schedule a Speaker.**
The mission of The Baptist Children's Village certainly does resonate with children and it is a joy for us to spend time talking about how God can use them to reach other children.
- Plan a Mission Project benefiting The Baptist Children's Village.**
Here are a couple ideas:
 - Collect Kids' Favorites
 - Ketchup
 - Hamburger Helper
 - Peanut Butter/Jelly
 - Collect Household Essentials
 - Garbage bags (large & kitchen size)
 - Paper Towels
 - Bathroom Tissue

Return this card or contact us by Tuesday, April 30, 2013 to order your FREE nametags, to schedule a speaker and/or plan a mission project.

The dates for our VBS are: ____/____/____ through ____/____/____
Please send me _____ free VBS nametags.
Our theme is: ☐ Colossal Coaster World ☐ Jungle Jount
I would like to schedule a speaker for our: ☐ Mission Study Time ☐ Kickoff ☐ Commencement
Date: ____/____/____ Time: ____
We would like our mission project to be for The BCV
☐ Kids Favorites ☐ Household Essentials ☐ I need pickup ☐ I will deliver

Name _____ Church's Name _____
Address _____ City/State/Zip _____
Phone _____ E-mail _____

For questions contact Celeste Cade at 601.952.2422 or ccade@baptistchildrensvillage.com

Be Guided by God's Word • 2 Timothy 3:1-17

The last days are perilous, according to this week's Sunday School passage. We live in those last days, or after Jesus' ascension and before His return. Paul encouraged Timothy in this difficult age to continue in what he had learned from his childhood, (2 Timothy 2:14-15 all Scriptures used are New King James version), even though many deserted the truth and ran to lawlessness.

Paul taught in 2 Timothy 3:13 that, "Evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." The word here translated evil also meant sick and degenerate in the original Greek. Deceiving and being deceived are participles, which denotes continual action. These people are first, continually deceived by Satan (2 John 1:7, Revelation 12:9), then they joined in the process and become continual deceivers. If people serve Satan during their lives, knowingly or not (Matthew 7:21-23), they will one day share his fate as well (Revelation 20:15).

Lost people are deceived and, because of their unbelief, are kept by Satan from coming to the cross for salvation. 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 reads, "Our gospel ... is veiled to those who are perishing. Regarding them: the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers so they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." Only

the mighty work of the Holy Spirit of God can open the blinded eyes of the lost, free them from the domain of darkness, and transfer them to the Kingdom of God's dear Son, (Colossians 1:13). God desires to save all people. I experienced that marvelous salvation at nine years old. I pray that you too have been transferred to the Kingdom of Christ. We will discuss this process in detail in the May 26 lesson from Titus 3:3-7.

Paul described those evil people in verses 2-9, particularly with a list of terrible attributes in verses 2-4: "lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God." He then described the heart of their problem in verse 7 as, "always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

From these passages we learn that sin is

progressive, not only staining and ruining the life of its participant, but also spreading to those around the sinner. Even those who are not extreme in all these sins, but do not know the Lord Jesus are lost. Many Americans are actually civilized pagans who have no time for God. They too will progress towards the above descriptions of the ungodly. They too have been

deceived and are deceivers.

Paul instructed Timothy to, "continue in the things which you have learned and been as-

sured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus," in verses 14-15. As the ungodly progress away from the Father anxious to save them (2 Peter 3:9), so believers are to progress towards the loving Father, (Philippians 1:6).

God's mighty word completely accomplishes His will (Isaiah 55:11). According

to 2 Timothy 3:15, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." God's word profits us in doctrine, also translated teaching; for reproof, or inner conviction, for correction, or improvement; and for instruction, or discipline in righteousness. That means that when we read, study, and hear God's word, He progressively changes us. From the above verse it teaches us God's truths (John 17:17). It convicts us of sin so we may be right with the Father (1 Corinthians 11:31-32). It improves us by correcting our faults (Philippians 2:15), and it teaches us how to be righteous (1 John 2:27 and Romans 3:21-22).

We live in a lawless age with evil ever increasing. While some complain about the wrong in the world, those who love the Lord grow closer to Him and share the power of God that alone can change unbelievers into Christ-followers. Let us not focus on the evil in the world but in God's solution, Jesus Christ. (James 1:20). As the lost are deceived and they deceive, may we the converted convert the lost to Christ.

Henson is pastor of Oakdale Church, Brandon.



Explore the Bible

with Rick Henson

The Blessings of Holiness • Leviticus 26:3-13, 40-42, 45

My back yard is home to two blueberry bushes. However, my thumb is brown, not green, and they've not produced loads of the luscious berries I anticipated. Late last fall, after the bushes became spindly and sparse, I decided to cut them way back. As springtime pushed aside the drab colors of winter, the dead-looking branches began putting out tiny green shoots. When we returned from being away two weeks, I was thrilled to see lush greenery. However, looking closer, my heart sank; there were no blooms, only a profusion of leaves!

Fruitfulness...the word gives us a good feeling, a sense of lavish abundance, doesn't it? We envision clusters of grapes bursting with sweet juice, or perhaps rows of tomato plants weighted-down with glossy red fruit. In this week's study, we see God wanting to bless His covenant people with overflowing fruitfulness, if they would but follow His statutes. Let's look at this and other ways God wanted to pour out His grace on them, and how we can relate to these Old Testament lessons.

As a society largely dependent on the success of their crops, the first section of promises no doubt brought the Israelites great joy. Their acceptance of God's call to a righteous lifestyle would assure them of ample rain and plentiful produce (vs. 2-5). A peaceful existence would be a real-

ity, as God not only removed "savage beasts from the land" (vs. 6 NIV), but also promised strength to overcome their enemies (vs. 7-9). A large number of children were considered a sign of God's favor, and the Lord said He would give increase in that area, too (vs. 9).

As believers, can we expect God to act in the same fashion toward us today? Do my fruitless blueberry bushes signify issues with my spiritual life? If that were the case, then one would assume a farmer who has more produce than he can even pick is enjoying the smile of God's favor. We don't have to look any further than the story of Job to discount that line of reasoning. However, the principle that God has blessed fruitfulness in store for those "branches" that are in vital union with and draw nourishment from the "vine" is a truth to which we can cling (see John 15:1-8).

Verses 11-13 speak of the promise of God's presence. The Lord said He would

make His dwelling with His people and walk among them. They were also reminded that His strong arm had brought them out of Egypt. The words "made you walk upright" (vs. 13, NKJV) are in stark contrast to the bent backs of slavery they'd previously endured. We walk in freedom as well. A footnote in the Life Application Bible puts it this way: "We too are set free when we accept

Christ's payment that redeems us from sin's slavery. We no longer need to be bogged down in shame over our past sins; we can

walk in dignity because God has forgiven us and forgotten them."

Verses 11-12 are referenced in 2 Corinthians 6:16: present-day believers are called "the temple of the living God". The verse continues: "I will live with them and walk among them and I will be their God and they will be my people" (NIV). The Holy Spirit indwells those who have trusted Christ (John 14:16-17), and we have the assurance that the

Lord will never leave us (Hebrews 13:5).

God warned the people of dire consequences if they turned their back on the holy lifestyle to which He called them (Lev. 26:14-39). However, when they confessed their iniquities (vs. 40) and repented (vs. 41), He promised to renew His covenant with them. In his With the Word devotional commentary, Warren Wiersbe says, "A gracious God always leaves the door open for restoration...God forgets our sins but remembers His covenant!" Christians who have strayed from His commands can be assured of forgiveness when, with sincere repentance, they confess their sins to the Lord (1 John 1:9).

Recounting the ways God promised to reward the Israelites' faithfulness (fruitfulness, presence and restoration), we can see relational similarities for us today. As we consider these spiritual truths from Leviticus, we must realize these Scriptures aren't to be looked at as a formula for experiencing God's hand of favor. Rather, they provide encouragement to live a holy, committed lifestyle, and God's blessings, distributed in ways of His choosing, will be the natural (and supernatural) result.

Maniscalco is a member of LeMoyné Boulevard Church, Biloxi.



Bible Studies for Life

with Ann Maniscalco



Revivals & Homecomings

► **First Church, Jackson:** 175th anniversary, Apr. 28; worship, 10:30 a.m. (no Sunday School), followed by dinner on the grounds; Frank Page, speaker; Larry Black, music; for more information, visit www.fbcj.org or call (601) 949-1900.

► **Sebastopol Church, Se-**

bastopol: Homecoming, Apr. 28; Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m., followed by potluck lunch and 1:15 p.m. services; John Sharp, speaker.

► **Double Springs Church, Maben:** Revival, Apr. 28 - May 1; Sun., 11 a.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Dan Robertson, speaker;

One Way Quartet and Bruce White, music.

► **Ed Johnson, Huntsville, Ala.,** preached a tent revival at **Macedonia Church, Myrtle, Mar. 31** - Apr. 5, with nine professions of faith.

► **Monticello Church, Monticello:** 25 year anniversary in their current building, Apr. 28; coffee and donuts, 8:30 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; wor-

ship, 10:30 a.m., followed by lunch.

► **Crowder Church, Crowder:** 39th annual homecoming, Apr. 28, 10:30 a.m.

► **First Church, Houlika:** Revival, Apr. 28 - May 1; Sun., potluck meal, 5 p.m.; worship, 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Jeff Harmon, speaker; Melinda Kopp, music; David Blackwell, pastor.

► **Clear Branch Church, Wesson:** Homecoming, Apr. 28; special recognition service, 9:30 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m. followed by covered dish lunch; Guy Burke, speaker; Mike Britt, music; Wayne Moak, pastor.

► **Harmony Church, Carroll County:** Homecoming, Apr. 28; services, 11 a.m., followed by dinner on the grounds; Larry Edwards, guest speaker.

Just for the Record



The GAs and their mothers from **ARLINGTON CHURCH, BOGUE CHITTO**, attended the mother-daughter night at Garaywa Camp and Conference Center Apr. 5 - 6. Shown are the 15 participants. Lorrie Lofton and Paula Linton, GA leaders.



Children from **BETHEL CHURCH, SMITH ASSOCIATION**, recently held a study of creation. Shown, with their art work, are Jacob McGriff, Cammie Royner, Cameron Rhodes, Dustin Goosby and Abby McGriff.



GAs and mothers from **ENTERPRISE CHURCH, CLARKE COUNTY**, attended the annual Morn & Me camp at Garaywa Camp and Conference Center.

The GAs of **CALVARY CHURCH, BOGUE CHITTO**, participated in Easter Mission by giving out water at Walmart and walking in the Callie Cole Walk for Missions. Shirley Allen and Pam Wallace, leaders; Hal Hatten, pastor.



EDNA CHURCH, COLUMBIA, presented their Easter musical Mar. 31. Len Cooke, director.



FIRST CHURCH, MCLAURIN, HATTIESBURG, licensed Tyler Turner to the ministry Mar. 31. He is shown receiving his license from pastor Felix Greer.



The Mississippi Department of Archives and History erected a historical marker at **FIRST CHURCH, COLUMBUS**, which tells the history of the 180-year-old church. Shown are pastor Shawn Parker, Frances Ayers, Bill Somerville, Bobby Sanderson, Raymond Gross, and Glenda Gross.



Kleber Jimenez (left), pastor of **IGLESIA EL BUEN PASTOR, FOREST**, presents a plaque of appreciation to David Michel, associate executive director for mission strategy at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, for the support and prayers from the convention's member churches for the ministries of Iglesia El Buen Pastor.

The Brotherhood of **CONCORD CHURCH, BEN-TON-TIPPAH ASSOCIATION**, selected Keith Mauney as Man of the Year. Lyle Bullock, director, presented the plaque on Baptist Men's Day. Shown are Bullock and Mauney.



Men from **BRANCH CHURCH, MORTON**, recently completed the Courageous Bible study. The men signed and read a proclamation commitment to strive each day to show godly character and leadership in all they do. Shown are Larry Drury, Clay Bates, Shane McGee, Chad Ragan, Eddie Bates, Tat Simpson, Tim Torrence, and Danny Torrence.